JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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In These Pages

CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHERS - front line of lay evangelism

The National Church School Convention focussing its attention on the theme Christ the Hope of the World, met in Kyoto for three days of lectures, discussion groups, and business meetings. 628 Church School teachers participated in the conference, 485 of these coming from outside the Kyoto area, paying their own travel and hotel expense. Although only three hundred delegates were expected, the combinantion of: top-notch speakers (Drs. Kagawa and Brunner), spring holidays; the attractiveness of beautiful Kyoto, and the hunger of Church School teachers for help and guidance in their jobs; all served to bring a large number of participants.

Dr. Brunner started the ball rolling with a talk on "The Place of Theology in Church School Education". In his clear lucid style he suggested that Christian Education is more than teaching the Bible, in fact it is more than teaching. "The Church has put too much emphasis on teaching, and this I feel is especially true in Japan." He then went on to suggest that Jesus commanded us to make disciples, and that disciples are made by discipline and training not through the intellectual appeal of teaching alone. "Christian Education must adopt the method of training which goes into practice."

The goal of Christian Education is stimulating faith in Jesus Christ. This means clarifying and making real for our times the revelation in history, the redemption through the cross, the experience of Salvation, the New Age breaking into the Old. "Christian Faith is simple to understand yet too simple to realize."

He then pointed out the importance of laymen in the educational outreach of the church. "The central position of the pastor in the Japanese church is an illustration of bad theology." Martin Luther clarified the universal priesthood of all church members. Everyone is held responsible to make disciples for Jesus Christ not just the pastor.

Leaving his sick bed tocome to the conference, Dr. Kagawa seemed in a reflective mood. He told the listeners that his time was almost up but he did not regret it. He had found more than 600 workers to carry on the work that he has started. Pointing to the Church School teachers before him he said, "you are the backbone of the future Church of Japan and thus the backbone of the national life of Japan."

Attending the first evening' lectures, of Drs. Brunner and Kagawa were over 2,300 people.

At a banquet on the following evening. Mr. Gizo Takayama of Kyoto spoke to the delegates. He said that when he was twelve he was impressed by two books, one of Tolstoy and the Bible. The phrase "Where Love is, God is" from Tolstoy and the Great Commandment in the Bible gave him a vision and conviction which have been the basic foundation of his life. Said the Christian mayor, "The Christian religion is a religion of action."

In addition to the lectures the delegates joined discussion groups of their choice. Seven groups discussed how to teach the miracles to Church school students. They were divided into those teaching kindergarten, three groups of those teaching primary, those working with junior high youth and those working with senior High. A separate group was held for those teaching various ages in small churches. Six groups concerned themselves with the task of Christian Education in the Church. One specialized in relating the Junior Church to the adult Church, another in leading youth to baptism, another on vocational guidance, a fifth on the place of Audio and the sixth on how to teach new hymns to children.

Some of the most interesting resolutions which were passed at the conference were as follows:

A. Since 90% of the budget of the Church School Department comes from abroad at his time, four methods will be undertaken to try to raise a larger part of the budget in Japan.

B. Local interdenominational Church School Unions will be formed to encourage inter-church cooperation and further the cause of ecumenicity on the grass-roots level.

C. A Unified Lesson curriculum will be added to the present Closely Graded course.

D. A three year statistical study of the weaknesses and needs of the Church Schools in Japan will be undertaken.

D. Until 1958 annual conventions of Church School teachers will continue to be held annually instead of biannually as they formerly were.

Partly as a result of this conference the Church Schools of two additional denominational groups who are not now a part of the NCC have decided to join the Church School Department. They are the Free Methodist Church and the Nazarene Church. The Salvation Army is already a member of the Church School Department.

President Seishiro Iwamura and Vice President Augustine Takase were re-elected to the board of Directors for another term.

LUTHERAN CONVENTION

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, at its annual convention in Fukuoka, May 3-5, acted to strengthen its seminary in Tokyo, initiated plans for special evangelistic efforts directed at middle and grade school teachers, and discussed but took no definite action on the current negotiations toward Lutheran unity in Japan. 50 Japanese pastors together with approximately 40 laymen and 25 voting missionaries made up the convention.

Dr. Chitose Kishi, president of the seminary for a number of years since the war, was relieved of certain other church responsibilities and re-elected to a four-year term as president of the Tokyo school. Eleven members of this year's graduating class, the largest in the seminary's history, were formally received as dendoshi, or evangelists, beginning two year's service prior to their ordination.

The church will give special attention in its evangelistic program for the coming year to the vast corps of grade and middle school teachers in Japan. Local and regional teachers' conferences are to be held, aimed at strengthening the sense of mission and vocation of Christian teachers and aimed at winning non-Christian teachers for the Church.

A careful report was heard of the Lutheran unity negotiations now under way in Japan. (see JCAN 5/1/55, p 3) There was a lengthy discussion centering on the concern of many of the pastors that a genuine unity, not an artificial or formal one, result from any merger. No action was called for from the JELC this year. The JELC is the only substantial indigenous Lutheran Church in Japan, embracing approximately 7,000 members in 81 congregations. Associated with it are the messions of the United Lutheran Church and the Augustana Lutheran Church in the United States and some smaller missions from Europe.

Ten new missionaries who came to Japan during the past year were introduced. The convention, upon the recommendation of the Central Executive Board, unanimously voted to welcome these missionaries and ask the Boards to send more to meet the increasing needs in Japan.

The convention approved the acceptance by Pastor Kiyoshi Hirai, past president of the JELC, of his election as executive Secretary of the Japan National Christian Council. The convention met in the old and strong Hakata Lutheran Church which is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year.

WOMEN'S HEALTH FAIR - The YWCA meets the public

As a part of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the YWCA in Japan this year, the Tokyo YWCA sponsored a five day Women's Health Fair this month at Mitsukoshi, the largest department store in Tokyo. About 10,000 people a day visited this display.

Using large pictures with lables, the display followed the life of a women from birth, through child and teenage problems and into family life and old age. It dealt with problems such as nutrition, boy-girl relations, health problems, and family relationships. The purpose was to help women to know how to have a better life in their homes.

The display is now being sent to the large cities throughout the country for wide use. The ¥2,000,000 cost of the display was raised by the members of the Tokyo YWCA.

The National YWCA announces that it will sponsor an Asia Women's Conference in May 1956. The theme will be "The Position of Women in the Home". It will try to strengthen the ideal of the Christian Home Delegates from various Christian groups all over Asia will be invited.

JAPANESE EMIGRANTS AND THE WCC - investigation for service

Representing the Japan office of the World Council of Churches Division of Inter-church Aid and Service to Refugees, Rev. Kentaro Buma will participate in the first world-wide consultation of this Division in Switzerland this July. There he will present the needs of churches in Japan and volunteer for the Japanese churches to participate in some sercice project abroad.

While in Geneva through the good offices of the W.C.C. he will visit inter-governmental organizations connected with the migration of peoples, such as the International Labor Organization and the Inter-governmental Committee for European Migration. As is well known, Japan is suffering with an acute problem of over-population which was aggravated by the forced repatriation of several millions soon after the war. Therefore, Mr. Buma will investigate the possibility of Japanese emigration and migration projects.

Since there are about 300,000 Japanese immigrants in Brazil Mr. Buma will spend several months there working with the W.C.C. Division of Inter-church Aid and Service to Refugees to find the best way to minister to their spiritual and material needs.

It has been interesting to note the enthusiastic interest and support of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Japanese Government to this project of the W.C.C. They are asking the W.C.C. to act as a bridge between Japan and the inter-governmental organizations on migration in Geneva.

TOKYO YMCA DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY - double membership and going strong

Gathering to fete the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Tokyo YMCA, two hundred representatives of all walks of life in the Tokyo area reviewed the accomplishments of the Y. Giving congratulatory addresses were Minister of Education, Kenzo; Governor of Tokyo, Yasui; and Chairman of the NCC, Kosaki.

The Tokyo Y has helped to start YMCAs in Sapporo and Kofu and just since the war has established three branch Associations in the Tokyo area. In the summer time, it operates three camps; one for boys, one for young adults, and one for under-priviledged boys.

In the four short years since the YMCA building was returned by the Occupation forces, the membership has jumped from 3,973 to 6,471 and the staff from 10 to 23. Now, every day between 5 and 6 PM about 2,000 young people pass through the doors of the Tokyo City YMCA to attend English classes, use the gymnasium, or participate in club activities. 90% of these young people are between the ages of 18 and 23.

An interesting commentary on contemporary social conditions in Japan is that 1/3 of the membership of the YMCA is female! This grows out of the fact that although the younger generation is "liberated" as far as the formal restrictions against boy-girl friendships are concerned, there are few places other than the YMCA or church youth groups where they can have a healthy social life together. However, because of the fine quality of boys attracted to the YMCA, both the girls and their parents feel they can trust the friendships which grow up here.